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ABSTRACT

Communities that have good schools and better educated residents are safer, more stable communities where businesses and families thrive. This pamphlet describes ways religious organizations can support family involvement in education. The pamphlet provides a statement of common purpose among religious communities supporting family involvement in learning, noting that it is imperative that these communities join with governments, community organizations, businesses, and schools to provide families with the information, skills, tools, and opportunities to encourage their participation in the total education of their children. The pamphlet also includes a form for joining the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education and delineates materials available from the U.S. Department of Education providing guidelines for getting families involved in education. Finally, the pamphlet describes ways a community can support schools and family involvement in education by: (1) combating alcohol, drugs, and violence; (2) providing mentoring programs; (3) enlisting community volunteers; (4) offering before- and after-school, weekend, and summer learning programs; (5) supporting early childhood development and preschool programs; and (6) teaching parenting skills. (KB)

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COMMUNITIES THAT SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES ARE BETTER PLACES TO LIVE, WORK, AND LEARN!

Communities that have good schools and better educated residents are safer, more stable communities where businesses and families thrive. These communities can be magnets for new businesses and jobs. Education is the key to a strong local economy, a good quality of life, and a brighter future for everyone!

"Better education is everybody's business!"

— Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Religious Organizations:

COME TOGETHER FOR KIDS!

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Partnership for Family Involvement
in Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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JOIN THE PARTNERSHIP FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF COMMON PURPOSE AMONG RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING

"Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray." *Proverbs 22:6*

As members of religious communities from across the land, we join to affirm the vital and enduring role of families in the education of children. We have always regarded families—and parents in particular—as the primary teachers of children. Encouraged by Secretary of Education Richard Riley's concern for all children and his commitment to the role of families in educating children, we call upon all people of good will to stand as one with us in support of families' participation in children's learning.

Parents and guardians need to immerse themselves in the education of their children as never before. Children need the immediate and constant support of their families. But there are other voices at odds with these goals: the voices of poverty, loneliness, and fear. Because of this, there are children who do not attend school regularly, whose test scores and grades falter, who have too much idle time, and whose parents are absent, too overwhelmed or too busy to spend time reading, talking, praying, playing, listening, helping or encouraging them.

Religious communities hear this cry. It is with this knowledge and in our unique roles that we stand united in our commitment to the involvement of family members in the education of children. We believe the participation of family members in the education and spiritual development of young people is fundamental to a child's preparation for adulthood and the responsibilities of citizenship. Our nation's future depends upon a shared concern for the education of young people.

It is imperative that religious communities join together with governments, community organizations, businesses, and public and private schools in striving to provide families, parents, grandparents, foster parents, guardians, or extended family members with the information, skills, tools, and opportunities that will encourage their participation in the total education of their children, including character education. We are committed to working together to improve children's learning through family involvement partnerships.

We are thankful for the blessings of religious liberty, a sacred trust, stated in the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution, that enables the members of all faiths to work together freely and openly for the common good. As beneficiaries of this great legacy, we pledge our support in encouraging family involvement in the education of children.

We call upon all citizens, religious communities, community organizations, and businesses to do their share. We urge family members to become actively involved in their children's education, religious communities to work to better understand and meet educational and family needs, community organizations to sponsor meaningful youth- and family-oriented activities, and businesses to adopt family-friendly policies in the workplace. Governments need to promote public policies that encourage greater family involvement in the education of all children. We challenge our society to value and nurture our children of today so that they can be productive citizens of tomorrow.

We would like to become a member of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. We commit our community organization to family-friendly practices and will work with others to form partnerships that support children's learning. (Please type or print the following information.)

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House of Worship/Religious Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

National Affiliation/Denomination: _____

Official: _____ Signature: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-Mail: _____

Send to: Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-8173 or fax to 202-205-9133 to receive your **Religious Communities Promise Certificate.** If you are a representative of a community organization and would like to join the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, please contact the U.S. Department of Education and ask for the **Community Promise.**

GREAT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- *America Goes Back to School* encourages everyone to go back to a school each fall to share their talents and experiences. A free kit is available to help you organize an event and start a long-term partnership between your local school and community organizations and businesses.

- *Think College Early* encourages students to take the tougher courses they need to be prepared to go to college, starting in middle school, and to inform parents of the necessary sequence of courses their child needs to take, such as algebra in the eighth grade and chemistry by eleventh or twelfth grade, as well as the financial planning needed to help pay for college.

- *America Reads Challenge: Read*Write*Now!* encourages children to read and write 30 minutes a day and to work with a learning partner. Age-appropriate activities and materials are available to help children work on their reading skills with parents, teenagers, and other caring adults.

- *Priority on After-School Extended Learning*. Partner members have placed new emphasis on the importance of providing before- and after-school activities that extend learning for children in a safe, drug-free environment.

To receive free information about any of these initiatives or to ask for materials, call the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY CAN DO TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Combat alcohol, drugs, and violence. Prevention programs work best when parents, students, law enforcement officials, and communities join together to fight back. Schools and community members can provide mentoring and after-school programs to give children safe havens from violence and alternatives to drugs.

Provide mentoring programs. Interested citizens—from employers to college students to members of faith communities to senior citizens—can participate in mentoring programs that provide emotional support and guidance to young people. Mentors can help with schoolwork, job skill development and career planning, and can help connect young people to the potential and importance of college and training beyond high school.

Enlist community volunteers. Community and religious organizations can organize support for young people. Senior citizens in many communities are putting their experience and expertise to work on behalf of children. Volunteers can serve as tutors or teacher aides, work in the library, or help with after-school activities.

Offer before- and after-school, weekend and summer learning programs. Community partnerships can make after-school and summer learning activities available to young people through schools, cultural institutions, park districts, and other public and private agencies. These programs are particularly important for children and adolescents to provide safe and enriching environments in a structured, supervised setting.

Support early childhood development and preschool programs. New scientific findings on brain development in very young children point to the importance of children's earliest experiences in helping them get off to a strong and healthy start. Community and religious organizations can help children start on the right path by supporting programs that work with young children and their parents.

Teach parenting skills. Programs for parents can include academic and GED classes, literacy training, career preparation, early childhood education, children's health, and assistance in finding helpful services in the community. High-quality parenting programs engage parents early, sometimes even before their child's birth.

PLEASE JOIN US

Your religious organization is invited to join the **Partnership for Family Involvement in Education**, a growing national coalition of thousands of families, schools, communities, religious organizations and employers who recognize their interdependent roles in supporting family and community involvement in children's learning and improving our schools. You can sign and return the **Statement of Common Purpose Among Religious Communities Supporting Family Involvement in Learning** on the inside of this brochure. For more complete information,

Call the U. S. Department of Education
at 1-800-USA-LEARN
or
Write to the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-9133
http://www.ed.gov/PFIE

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